

**LJUBAV U SJENI  
MELANKOLIJE:  
žudnja, strast i bol u poetici  
Marguerite Duras**

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**LOVE IN THE SHADOW  
OF MELANCHOLY:  
Desire, passion, and pain  
in the poeticism of  
Marguerite Duras**

## IZVORNI ZNANSTVENI RAD

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82DURAS, M.

**SAŽETAK:** Središnju tematiku želje i erotske strasti prožimaju usporedni i suprotni motivi melankolije i manjka (uskrate). Ova dihotomija prisutna je na svim razinama pisanja i poetike Marguerite Duras – od tematike preko naracije, retorike i stila do višeslojne metaforičnosti. Polazište njezina umjetničkog, „ženskog”, pjesničkog rukopisa (*écriture*) u drugačijem je, uzajamnijem odnosu između tijela (osjeta, emocija) i jezika, imaginarnog i simboličkog, slike i riječi, doslovnog i svih prenesenih značenja – u tekstu. To se očituje u ovom lirskom, avangardnom, ujedno modernom i antimodernom opusu na križanju proze i poezije, kao i u eksperimentalnom, novovalnom filmu 1960-ih i 1970-ih. U srži „poetike žudnje” nalazi se dihotomičan odnos suprotnosti, ali i razmjene između osjetilnosti i spoznaje, ljubavi i boli. Ključ je te poetike sljublivanje i interakcija antinomija koje ipak ostaju – razlike (kao što su muško i žensko, Istok i Zapad, strast i melankolija, „život” i „art”...). „Ženska” žudnja preobražava se u gestu unutrašnjeg egzila i subverzije subjekta prema povijesnom determinizmu, autoritarizmu društvene moći i *ratia*. Motivima erotske strasti i ljubavi pridružuju se bol zaborava i bol pamćenja. Pismo je semiotizirana interpretacija iskustva, odnos nesvjesnoga i jezika. Želja i strast kao najjači *élan vital* antipod su potištenosti i osjećaju kontingencije. Žudnja i tjeskoba dva su pola graničnog, paradoksalnog pisma „ženske razlike” (*border writing*). U prostoru između tjelesnosti i semiotike, osobne i rodne povijesti, ljubav i pismo, etika i filozofija, poetika i jezik ponašaju se kao uzajamne metafore.

**KLJUČNE RIJEČI:** žudnja, strast, melankolija, „žensko pismo”, poetika tranzicije

**DIJELOVI:** Poetika žudnje i uskrate, Paradoksalno pismo ili *border writing*,

Žudnja u tekstu – putanje strasti u vremenu

## Poetika žudnje i uskrate

„Žene nipošto ne pišu iz istog mjesta kao muškarci. A kad žene ne pišu iz mjesta žudnje, one ne pišu, one plagiraju.”  
„Žene vide svijet drugačije.” M. Duras

*Pisat ću i kad me jednom više ne bude...* Tako je govorila Marguerite Duras (Gia-Dinh, 1914. – Pariz, 1996.), vjerujući u „malu vječnost” književnog djela koju će, bar za neko vrijeme, omogućiti želja budućih čitatelja. A njezin zagonetni aforizam *Pisanje je poljubac mrtvom tijelu ljubavi* spaja u jednom dahu ljubav, smrt i pismo u nerazdvojuvu cjelinu. Govoriti nakon Barthesa o libidinalnoj energiji, a nakon Lacana o odnosu nesvjesnoga i jezika kao poveznici između pisanja i erosa postalo je već opće mjesto. No shvaćanje ljubavi kao počela umjetnosti i filozofije, u teoriji poznato, ali u književnosti nedovoljno istraženo, čini temeljnu intuiciju u stvaralaštvu ove pjesnikinje. Ta se u svakom tekstu očituje malo drugačije, ovisno o suptilnoj alkemiji pisma, o načinu „konverzije vidljivog u nevidljivo” (Blanchot), o transformaciji iskustva i osjećaja u pjesnički jezik. No ako je svako umjetničko pismo po svojoj prirodi izraz „majčinske” žudnje u jeziku (Genette), govoriti o „pismu žudnje” općenito, a kod M. Duras posebice, jest tautologija. Ili možda ipak nije? Najprevođenija francuska spisateljica druge polovine 20. stoljeća bila je i ostala, od prvih

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**SUMMARY:** The central themes of desire and erotic passion are here merged with the secondary and contrary motifs of melancholy and deprivation. This dichotomy is present on all levels of writing and poeticism of Marguerite Duras – from the topics to her narration, rhetoric, and style, as well as her multi-layered metaphors. The starting point of her artistic, “feminine” poetic writing (*écriture*) is a different, reciprocal relationship between the body (senses, emotions) and language, imaginary and symbolical, image and word, the literal meaning and the figurative one – in the text. All this is manifested in her lyrical, avantgarde opus, modern and anti-modern at the same time, at the intersection of prose and poetry, as well as in her experimental, new-wave cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. At the core of her “poeticism of desire” there is a dichotomy of opposition, as well as exchange between sensuousness and knowledge, love and pain. The key of that poeticism is the fusion and interaction of antinomies, which nevertheless persist as differences (male-female, East-West, passion and melancholy, “life” and “art”). “Feminine” desire is transformed into a gesture of inner exile and the subject’s subversion of historical determinism, the authoritarianism of social power and ratio. The motifs of erotic passion and love are combined with the pain of forgetting and the pain of remembering. Her writing is a semiotized interpretation of experience, a relationship between the unconscious and language. Desire and passion as the most powerful *élan vital* are antipodes to depression and the feeling of contingency. Desire and anxiety are the two extremes of this liminal, paradoxical writing of “female difference” (*border writing*). In between corporality and semiotics, personal and gender history – love and writing, ethic and philosophy, poeticism and language function as mutual metaphors.

**KEYWORDS:** desire, passion, melancholy, “feminine writing”, poeticism of transition

**SECTIONS:** Poeticism of desire and deprivation, Paradoxical or border writing, Desire in text – trajectories of passion

## Poeticism of desire and deprivation

“Women do not write in the same place as men at all. And when they do not write in the place of desire, they are plagiarizing.”  
“Women see the world differently.” M. Duras

“I will write even when I am no longer there...” – this is what Marguerite Duras (1914-1996) used to say, believing in the “small eternity” of a work of literature, made possible by the desire of her future readers. And her enigmatic aphorism “Writing is a kiss on the dead body of love” connects in a single breath love, death, and writing into an inseparable whole. It has become a commonplace to speak of libidinal energy (Barthes) and of the relationship between the unconscious and language as the link between writing and Eros (Lacan). However, understanding love as the first principle of art and philosophy, known in theory yet insufficiently researched in literature, constitutes the basic intuition in Duras’ oeuvre. It is manifested somewhat differently in each of her texts, depending on the subtle alchemy of writing, on the manner of “converting the visible into the invisible” (Blanchot), on the transformation of experience and emotions into the language of poetry. But if all artistic writing is in its very nature an expression of “maternal” desire in language (Genette), speaking of the “writing of desire” generally, and in M. Duras specifically, is a tautology. Or perhaps not? The most translated French female writer from the second half

romana pa sve do kraja pisanja/života, pjesnikinja ljubavi i strasti. U brojnim prozama, kazalištu i filmovima ona ustrajno upisuje želju i osjeća je kao bitnu motivaciju svojih zanesenih likova i svojega – pisanja. U tim strasnim i sjetnim pričama ljubav je uvijek ključni događaj, pa čak i kad je prešućena, ili kad je, kao gotovo uvijek, zasjenjena melankolijom. To su mahom lirski, pjesnički, senzibilni, ali i misaoni, krišom konceptualni tekstovi, najčešće poetske proze, uvijek art-filmovi. U njima se, što je za običnu, „proznu” prozu dosta iznimno, bitni motivi erotske želje ili njezine uskrate zahvaljujući izražajnosti jezika doista i *upisuju* u tekst, a ne samo *opisuju*. To znači da su potekli iz dubine samoga jezika, iz zone dosvjesnoga, da se nalaze na rubu „krika, pjesme, šutnje” ili nemislivog, da se poput krvotoka provlače kroz poetiku, retoriku i stil, kroz naraciju i semiotiku. Kao i kroz sve žanrovske i medijske inačice ovog pola stoljeća dugog i široko razvedenoga opusa.

Marguerite Duras sebe je oduvijek doživljavala kao „*pisca* romana”, a što nije tautologija, jer ona pod *pismom* misli na pjesničko pisanje („*écriture*”), na lirsku, emotivnu, ali ujedno i misaonu „umjetnost riječi”. Tekst je za nju naime mnogo više od samog pričanja; *pisanje je upravo suprotno od pričanja priče*, kaže. To je konverzija narativa u pjesnički znak koji ne opisuje svijet, nego ga iz dubine jezika stvara, kao što i priču o ljubavi treba prije svega riječima *dočarati*. Tako su eros i pisanje postali

kod M. Duras dvije *uzajamne metafore*, slično kao što je to, posebno od romantizma do postmodernizma, bio onaj fluidni odnos spojenih posuda između „života” i „umjetnosti”. Od doba europskog romantizma napose, pa sve do danas, pjesništvo sebe zamišlja kao kritiku, osjetilnošću ili mitom, Descartesova *cogita*, kao kritiku *ratio*. Umjetnost riječi spontano „popravlja” analitički um i jezik osjetilnim doživljajem i emocijama: ljubav je, kao i pjesništvo, istina o nerazdvojjivosti duha, duše i tijela (Scheler). *Posjedovati istinu u duši i u tijelu* stih je kojim završava Rimbaudova *Sezona u paklu*. To treba shvatiti kao izraz težnje za autentičnim i cjelovitim. Ja ovog vjerojatno najmlađeg pjesnika žudnje ikada. Ali kako u tekst upisati čulnost, kako otjeloviti „istinu duše i tijela” u pismu? *Izumila sam organski diskurs jer nisam imala nikakvih uzora*, kaže M. Duras u želji da ostvari vlastiti „ženski” doprinos estetici kasnog modernizma pedesetih. Ta mješavina tjelesnosti, misaonosti i najsuptilnijeg osjećaja za jezik koji je kod nje nešto poput šestog čula daje iznimnu privlačnost stvaralaštvu M. Duras. Dodajmo k tome činjenicu da je prva „destigmatizirala” ljubav kao presudnu tematiku za umjetničku praksu visoke književnosti druge polovice 20. stoljeća, iz koje je nakon II. svjetskog rata bila gotovo nestala. Zatim da ju je odvojila od sentimentalizma, „trivijalnosti” i klišeja, da ju je pokazala u svoj njezinoj silini kao opasnu, ali ujedno i nezamjenjivu za

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century remains – from her first novels to the very end of her writing/life – a poetess of love and passion. In her numerous prose works, plays, and films, she persistently inscribed desire and emotions as the essential motives into her dreamer protagonists and her – writing. In those passionate and melancholic stories, love is always the crucial event, even when tacit or – almost always – overshadowed by melancholy. These include largely lyrical, poetic, both emotional and philosophical, covertly conceptual texts, mostly poetical prose and regularly “art” films. The crucial motifs in this rather regular, “prosaic” prose – erotic desire and its deprivation – are indeed *inscribed*, rather than *described* in the text, owing to the expressive language. This means that they originate in the depths of language as such, in the zone of the subconscious, that they are on the verge of “scream, song, silence” or the unthinkable, that they permeate, like a bloodstream, all poeticism, rhetoric and style, narration and semiotics. As well as all variants of genre and media in Duras’ semi-centennial, broadly laid oeuvre.

Marguerite Duras always saw herself as a “novel writer”, which is not a tautology, since she understood the term “writing” as poetic writing (*écriture*), a lyrical, emotional, as well as philosophical “art of words”. For her, text was far more than mere narration: “writing is contrary to storytelling”, in her own words. It is a conversion of the narrative into a poetic sign, which does not describe the world, but rather creates it from the depths of language, just like a love

story must be primarily *conjured* by means of words. Thus, for M. Duras eros and writing were two *reciprocal metaphors*, somewhat like a fluid relationship between the two connected vessels of “life” and “art” in the period from romanticism to post-modernism. Since the European romanticism, poetry has seen itself as a critique of Descartes’ *cogito* or a critique of *ratio*, be it through sensuality or through myths. The art of words spontaneously “corrects” the analytical mind by introducing sensual experiences and emotions: love, same as poetry, is a truth about the inseparability of the spirit, the soul, and the body (Scheler). “And I will be able now to possess the truth within one body and one soul” is the verse ending Rimbaud’s *A Season in Hell*, to be understood as an expression of yearning for an authentic and integral Self, voiced by the probably youngest poet of desire ever. But how should one inscribe sensuality into the text, or incorporate “the truth within one body and one soul” in writing? “I have invented organic discourse because I did not have any models”, M. Duras once said, referring to her wish to give her own “feminine” contribution to the aestheticism of late modernism in the 1950s. This mixture of corporality, reflexivity, and a feeling for language – which is with Duras something like the sixth sense – makes her art exceptionally attractive. One should add the fact that she was the first to “de-stigmatize” love as the leading topic in the art practice of high literature during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after it had almost entirely disappeared following World War II. She also

oblikovanje identiteta subjekta, uvijek u nastajanju. Štoviše, ona je upravo u problematici ljubavi – zvala se ta *eros*, *agape* ili *caritas* – vidjela ne samo početak pisanja nego i analogiju s počelima filozofije, etike i psihoanalize. Prepoznala je u njoj poveznicu između misli i osjećaja, svjesnog i nesvjesnog, sintezu „percepta, afekta i koncepta” (Deleuze) bez koje nema umjetničkog stvaralaštva. Na tragu Rimbauda i velikoga „jezičnog obrata” nakon simbolizma (kad jezik postaje svoj vlastiti objekt i subjekt pjesništva), ova se autorica intenzivno kreativno bavi samim označiteljem, što nije tako uobičajeno u proznom pisanju. Uspostavlja novi dubinski odnos između emocija, tjelesnosti i jezika u poetski svedenoj, lirskoj, neobičnoj prozi time što uvodi u visokostiliziran „prirodni” jezik elemente usmenosti i govornoga, čija je subverzivnost spram norme važan dio njezine pjesničke izvornosti. Na razini sadržine također je riječ o diverziji: ova se u prvom redu ukazuje kao ljubavna, ali često izgrednička i nadasve bolna. Sve je u toj prozi, kao i u filmovima, emotivno, erotsko i dramatično, ali ujedno i ritmično, skladno i melodično, uvijek diskretno metaforično. A šutnja ili stanka u tekstu ima ulogu prigušivača: ona otvara prostor za nečujno protjecanje žudnje, za finu „poetiku pretapanja” u zoni dodira. Zato se ovo ambivalentno pismo može definirati kao rubno, granično, kao tzv. *border writing*, što je možda stožerni koncept određene „ženske” poetike, a sasvim izvjesno one M.

Duras. Slike su, s druge strane, višeslojne i snažne, točne do boli, a svaka bi rečenica mogla postati još jedna neispričana priča prisutna „u otisku”, poput skrivene alegorije. Jer osjećajnost sama po sebi nije dovoljna, kao ni nadarenost – ona mora proći kroz „filtrar inteligencije”, postati misaoni i estetički koncept, „da ne dosadi”, smatra autorica. Zato će njezino pismo uvijek biti izraz metaforičke sprege misli i osjećaja, „umjetnosti” i „života”, kontingencije i – sekularne metafizike. Naziremo, u otisku, sklonost spoznajnim analogijama pjesnika-mislilaca iz razdoblja romantizma, ali bez njihove sujete i egocentrizma. Za M. Duras odnos empatije prema drugome, kao i podrievanje svakog dogmatizma i autoritarizma, više je od ideologije – to je mnogo šire shvaćeno zalaganje za povezivanje ljudskih bića humanističkim „plurilogom” razlika (Kristeva) koji je temelj demokracije, ali i za istinu subjekta – pojedinca (poglavito ženskog), ostvarenu u slobodi „duha i tijela”. S obzirom na to da je međutim riječ o autorici svojevrsne književne kozmogonije, njezin opus treba čitati u cjelini, kao jedno jedinstveno djelo, koje ima svoju osobnu mitogenezu i bogato razvedeni hipertekst, unatoč svojoj svedenosti. Njegova priroda arhipelaga s rasutim „otocima” pojedinih tekstova, filmova i drama koji se međusobno osvjetljavaju, nadopunjuju ili osporavaju odaje dvije na prvi pogled raznorodne konstante: to su *kontinuitet* (tematski, ideološki, psihološki), kao težnja

separated it from sentimentalism, “triviality” and cliché, showing it in all its power as dangerous yet irreplaceable in shaping the subject’s identity, always in becoming. Moreover, it was in the topic of love – whether *eros*, *agape*, or *caritas* – that she saw not only the beginning of all writing, but also an analogy with the principles of philosophy, ethics, and psychoanalysis. She saw in it a link between thoughts and feelings, conscious and unconscious, a synthesis of “percept, affect, and concept” (Deleuze) that no artistic creation can do without. Following Rimbaud and the major “linguistic turn” after symbolism (when language became its own topic and the subject of poetry), Duras focused intensely creatively on the signifier as such, which was not very common in prose writing. She established a new, profound relationship between emotions, corporality, and language in her poetically reduced, lyrical, and unusual prose by introducing elements of oral, everyday speech into the stylized “natural” language, as she considered their subversiveness with regard to the norm as an important aspect of her poetic originality. Diversion was present on the level of content as well, as her texts are chiefly about love, yet often a transgressive and extremely painful one. In her prose, as well as her films, everything is emotional, erotic, and dramatic, yet also rhythmical, harmonious, and melodic, always discretely metaphorical. Silences or breaks in the text play the role of a muffler: they open up space for an inaudible flow of desire, for a fine “poeticism of coincidence” in the zone of touch. Therefore, this ambivalent

writing can be defined as liminal, *border writing*, which is perhaps the key concept in “feminine” poeticism and most certainly in that of M. Duras. On the other hand, her images are multi-layered and powerful, precise to the extreme, and each sentence could become yet another untold story present “in offprint”, like a hidden allegory. For emotions are not enough in themselves, same as talents – they must pass through the “filter of intelligence”, become a philosophical and aesthetical concept, “otherwise it becomes boring”, as Duras once said. Thus, her writing always remains an expression of a metaphorical fusion of thoughts and feelings, of “art” and “life”, contingency and – secular metaphysics. One can discern, in offprint, an inclination towards the epistemic analogies of poets-thinkers from the romanticist period, yet without their vanity or egocentricity. For Duras, empathy for the other, as well as subversion of all dogmatism and authoritarianism, is more than an ideology – it is, very broadly understood, an endorsement of human interconnection by means of a humanist “plurilogue” (Kristeva) as well as the truth of the subject-individual (primarily female), realized in the freedom of “body and spirit”. Nevertheless, since Duras is the author of a sort of literary cosmogony, her opus must be read as a whole, as one unique work that has its own mythogenesis and a richly ramified hypertext despite its reduction. Its nature of an archipelago with dispersed “islands” of individual texts, films, and plays that illuminate, complement, or challenge each other reveals two constants,

povezivanju i koheziji, te *diskontinuitet* (formalni, žanrovski, medijski, stilski), kao proces preobrazbe i mijene. Dvije se težnje križaju poput osi selekcije i kombinacije u rotaciji, tvoreći gusti raster aksiološke i strukturne isprepletenosti. Dva protuslovna gibanja svjedoče o usporednom naporu propitivanja i variranja istog umjetničkog procesa: suptilni postmodernistički senzibilitet uspostavlja mrežu „korespondencija” između Istoka i Zapada, prirode i kulture, tjelesnosti i *ratia*, muškog i ženskog... po načelu uzajamne „žudnje” i međudjelovanja. A opći princip oksimoronskog dijaloga razlika mogao bi biti zaštitni znak ovog kasnomodernističkog, subverzivnog, lirsko-metafizičkog stvaralaštva. A Marguerite Duras zacijelo je posljednja francuska romantičarka, iako se to obično tako ne kaže. Taj kontinuitet kohezivne, pozitivne želje u odnosu na bitak i svijet, unatoč formalnom diskontinuitetu kao znaku dvojbe ili tjeskobe, primijetiti će svi usredotočeni čitatelji. Opus zadaje muke i tumačima: oni moraju i sami slijediti tu dvostruku putanju dvojakog pogleda koji ujedno obuhvaća njegovu globalnu cjelinu, ali i strukturalnu posebnost pojedinih dijelova, srodnih, a opet različitih, ulančanih i promjenjivih poput prizora kakvoga razigranog kaleidoskopa. S jedne strane svjedočimo u cijelom opusu anticipatorskoj vidovitosti i dosljednosti misli i svjetonazora, a s druge strane razgranatim formalnim, žanrovskim i medijskim istraživanjima.

Međutim, treba reći da ona nisu usporedna s glavnim tokovima poslijeratne europske književnosti 20. stoljeća, nego da im za čitava desetljeća prethode, zahvaljujući intuiciji svih velikih pisaca za ono što će tek doći. I dok neki kritičari hvalje osebujnost eksperimenta koji je začudan s obzirom na istodobnu žanrovsku „trivijalnost” melodrame ili ljubavnog romana, za druge će baš tematska ustrajnost i idejna dosljednost predstavljati temeljnu vrijednost ovog opusa. Međutim, upravo u toj dvojnosti očituje se izvornost stvaralaštva M. Duras. Varijante srodnih moralnih, metafizičkih ili društvenih preokupacija, unatoč prividnoj istrošenosti (na rubu *camp* estetike ili popularne književnosti) skrivaju u sebi prva i posljednja pitanja stara kao svijet, jer se odnose na ljubav, bol, smrt i pisanje, na smisao i sveto... No iskušavanja raznih medija i stilova opet nisu drugo do varijacije na temu ranjivosti žudnje, ali i mogućnosti njezina neočekivanog obnavljanja. Kroz paradoksalno suglasje analogija i protuslovnosti moguće je uočiti trajne konstante u ovom pola vijeka dugom stvaralaštvu: isprekidani kontinuitet želje, „nestalnost srca” i ponovno rađanje žudnje u nekom novom tijelu nalaze svoj izraz u međuprostoru između ljubavi i melankolije, sreće i boli postojanja. A pismo je ono što će kao sublimirana esencija afekta preživjeti onkraj „smrti stvari i bića” (Proust). Pisanjem se ljubav vraća u život kao semiotizirano, reinterpetirano sjećanje – time se prirodno

different at the first glance: *continuity* (thematic, ideological, psychological) as a tendency of connection and cohesion, and *discontinuity* (formal, genre and media-related, and stylistic) as a process of transformation and change. These two tendencies intersect like two axes of selection and combination in alternation, creating a dense raster of axiological and structural intertwinement. Two opposing movements testify of a parallel effort to question and vary the same artistic process: subtle postmodern sensibility (retro-modernism?) establishes a network of “correspondences” between East and West, nature and culture, corporality and *ratio*, male and female, according to the principle of mutual “desire”. And the general principle of oxymoronic dialogue between differences could be the landmark of this late modernist, subversive, lyrical-metaphysical oeuvre. Marguerite Duras is certainly the last French romanticist, even though this is rarely stated. This continuity of cohesive, positive desire with regard to being and the world, despite the formal discontinuity as a sign of doubt or anxiety, is something that all focused readers will notice. Her work gives headache to its interpreters as well, who must follow the same two-tiered trajectory of double gaze, which encompasses the global whole as well as the structural specificities of its individual parts, similar yet different, interconnected and changeable like scenes in a playful kaleidoscope.

On the one hand, Duras’ opus reveals anticipatory clairvoyance and consistence in thought and worldview, on the other hand

ramified formal, genre- and media-related research. One must say, however, that they cannot be compared to the main currents of post-war European literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as they precede them for decades, owing to the intuition of all great writers for what will come. And whereas some critics praise the peculiar nature of this experiment, which is strange when compared to the “triviality” of genres such as melodrama or love novel, for others this thematic persistence and conceptual consistence will be the fundamental value of Duras’ opus. However, it is in this duality that her originality of is manifested. Variants of moral, metaphysical, and social preoccupations, despite being apparently exhausted (on the edge of *camp* aestheticism or popular literature), conceal the first and last questions that are as old as the world, since they speak of love, pain, death, and writing, the meaning and the sacred... Nevertheless, experiments with various media and styles are nothing else but variations on the topic of vulnerability of desire and the possibility of its unexpected renewal. In the paradoxical harmony of analogies and contradictions, one can notice persisting constants in this half-centennial oeuvre: ruptured continuity of desire, the “instability of heart” and the rebirth of desire in a new body find their expression between love and melancholy, the joy and pain of existence. And writing is that which will survive beyond the “death of things and beings” (Proust) as the sublimated essence of affect. Writing brings love back to life as a semiotized, reinterpreted memory – which naturally closes the circle that keeps

zatvara krug koji u vječnoj napetosti drži antagonizam života i smrti. Pismo je ono mjesto gdje se, zahvaljujući rekonverziji u pjesnički jezik gnijezdi uvijek nova žudnja (pisca i čitatelja) i gdje smrtnost postaje bar malo – besmrtna.

Polazeći od svojevrsnog neorealizma još ovisnog o simulakrumu mimeze i referencijalnom diskursu u kanonskoj zapadnjačkoj maniri, M. Duras nalazi s vremenom svoj osobni ton u romanu dijalogu, u romanu scenariju i romanu poemi koji su nešto poput stiliziranih inkantacija na rubu šutnje. U dosluhu su s drugačijim kulturnim podnebljima, s onima Dalekog Istoka koja čine bitan dio autoričine stvarne i intelektualne biografije. Taj životni i stvaralački lûk nju će u kasnijim fazama neizbježno odvesti prema slojevitom, semiotičkom pismu, pa napokon i art-filmu: *Knjiga ne dovršava priču, ne zaključuje ništa... tekst je uvijek otvoren za nova čitanja*, smatra autorica. *Da bih razorila ono što je napisano i što dakle ne završava, moram uraditi od knjige film; film je nešto kao završna točka, doseguta konačnost, kraj*. U filmu *La Femme du Gange* (Žena s Gangesa, 1973.) tri su knjige raskomadane, masakrirane. To znači da je pismo zaničljivo. Tako su u hibridnom djelu s naslovom *India Song* (1973.) i podnaslovom „tekst-teatar-film”, kao i u istoimenom filmu, stopljene čak četiri knjige. Intertekstualno kodiranje – likovi i teme ponavljaju se iz djela, slični, a opet različiti – ima zacijelo puno smisla, ali samo za u kontekst opusa upućenog

čitatelja/gledatelja. A prelijepi kulturni art-film *India Song* (1975.) bit će uskoro pretopljen kao kakvom negativnom alkemijom u nihilizam radikalnog antifilma *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert* (Njezino venecijansko ime u pustoj Calcutti, 1976.). Glazbena, zvučna i filmska traka ovdje su u potpunosti razdvojene: uz nove kadrove što prikazuju opustošeni set sa snimanja *India Songa* montirana je njegova bivša zvučna traka: strasna glazba Carlosa Alessia i ljubavni šapat glasova u *offu* podsjećaju na film kojeg na ekranu – nema. No slike žudnje, strasti i sjete iz već viđenog, a potom izbrisano filma, postoje i dalje u svijesti gledatelja. On ih doživljava simultano, kao u dvostrukoj ekspoziciji što spaja, preko hijata, nove prizore destrukcije s poznatim slikama iz sjećanja. Oba su filma, i to samo zajedno, zamišljena kao izniman i hrabar eksperiment, kao filmska metafora koja upravo *odvajanjem* slike i zvuka i glazbe pokazuje *neodvojivost* pamćenja i zaborava, ljubavi i žalovanja u kontradiktornim oscilacijama spirale. Kao i u tekstovima, to strukturno načelo sljublivanja protuslovlja, to razdvajanje slike i zvuka, vidljivog i nevidljivog koji „razgovaraju” preko procijepa velika je novost i diverzija u odnosu na tautološku, mimetičku, redundantnu filmsku naraciju.

the antagonism between life and death in eternal tension. Writing is the place where, owing to the reconversion into poetic language, new desire (of the writer and the reader) nests all over again and mortality becomes at least a bit – immortal.

Starting from a sort of neo-realism, still dependent on the simulacrum of mimesis and the referential discourse in the canonical Western manner, M. Duras found with time her personal tone in the novel-dialogue, novel-script, and novel-poem, which are something like stylized incantations on the edge of silence. Her stories often take place in a different cultural setting, that of the Far East as an essential part of her actual and intellectual biography. This arch of life and creativity would take her inevitably towards a multi-layered semiotic writing in the later phases, and eventually to art film: “A book does not end the story, it does not conclude anything... a text is always open for new readings”, the writer once said. “In order to demolish what has been written, and what therefore has no end, I must make a film out of the book: a film is something like a period, a finality reached, an end. For the film *Woman of the Ganges* (*La Femme du Gange*, 1973), three books have been torn into pieces, massacred. This means that writing has turned silent.” In a hybrid work titled *India Song* (1973) and subtitled “text-theatre-film”, as many as four books have been merged, same as in the film with the same name.

Intratextual encoding – protagonists and topics reoccur in various works, similar and yet different – certainly makes lots of sense,

but only to an initiated reader/spectator. And the beautiful, iconic art film *India Song* (1975) was soon melted – as if in some sort of negative alchemy – into the nihilism of the radical anti-film called *Her Venetian Name in Deserted Calcutta* (*Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert*, 1976). Soundtrack, audio, and film tapes have here been completely separated: the new scenes showing the deserted stage set from shooting *India Song* have been merged with the former soundtrack: thus, the passionate music of Carlos D’Alessio and the amorous whispering in the background remind us of a film that is – not there. But the images of desire, passion, and melancholy from the previously seen and then erased film still linger in the spectator’s mind. We experience them simultaneously, as in a double exposure that connects, through a hiatus, new scenes with images from our memory. Both films, which only function together, have been intended as an exceptional and courageous experiment, a cinematic metaphor that uses the *separation* of image, sound, and music in order to demonstrate the *inseparability* of remembering and forgetting, of love and sorrow, in contradictory oscillations like a spiral. Same as in texts, this structural principle of combining contradictions, this separation between image and sound, visible and invisible, which “talk” over a hiatus, was a great novelty and subversion with regard to tautological, mimetic, and redundant filmic narration.



## Paradoksalno pismo ili *border writing*

„Pisanje je most preko ponora.” M. Duras

Ovakav razvoj opusa na tragu istraživanja dvojnog koncepta evolucije i involucije, modernog i antimodernog, progresije i regresije... moguće je sažeti u poetičkom konceptu kao već spomenuti *border writing*. On je tipičan za umjetnost povijesne i kulturne tranzicije kao što su to bili romantizam i simbolizam, ali pogotovo za ovu posljednju, „žensku”, neofeminističku, i to u njezinim raznim poetičkim varijacijama unutar opusa M. Duras. Vlastiti razvojni put začudio je i samu spisateljicu: ona se u jednom trenutku više i ne „prepoznaje” u svojoj ranoj fazi koju smatra suviše „raspričanom”, doslovnom, diskurzivnom, „muškom”. Kratkim lirskim romanom *Moderato cantabile* (1958.) svjesno se opredjeljuje za književnost „izvedbe” (*du faire*), a ne za književnost „pričanja” (*du dire*). „Izvedba” ovdje znači visoki stupanj svedenosti, simbolike i performantnosti, kao i pritajenog konstruktivizma. Riječ je o snaženju identiteta urođene i stečene „ženske prirode”, njezina djelomičnog esencijalizma, koji se kombinira s „dekonstrukcijom” (Derrida) nesimetrične rodne povijesti i egzistencijalizmom. Rodna razlika kao društveni konstrukt u smislu S. de Beauvoir neodvojiva je kod M. Duras od uvjerenja o postojanju neke mnogo šire i

sveobuhvatnije razlike, a koju se tek naknadno doživljava kao primarno seksualiziranu: u tome uočavamo zanimljiv pokušaj sintetiziranja dviju oprečnih neofeminističkih i antropoloških teorija 20. stoljeća. Paradoksalno i krajnje suzdržano pisanje, popraćeno destrukcijom naracije i „krizom” prvostupanjskog, doslovnog značenja temelji se, smatra autorica, na represiji ženske samosvijesti i stvaralaštva u povijesti, ali i na urođenoj „ženskoj” prirodi. Rezultat je lirska, pjesnička umjetnost, po formi cizelirana, ali po sadržini ambivalentna. Mada djeluje nehajno, „polusirovo” i nedovršeno, brižljivo je kontrolirana i suzdržana. Ona je šutljiva jer se time otvara prema nekazanom, u pravcu nesvjesnog, na tragu asimptote žudnje. Iz nje je ispušteno gotovo sve što je u prozi inače uobičajeno, sve ono suvišno, dok je struktura svedena do sheme kristala ili skeleta. Tjelesna osjetilnost/osjećajnost seli se s razine narativa na razinu izraza, a taj ima moć širenja i zavođenja kao najbolja lirska poezija. Forma i sadržina postale su uzajamne metafore – one zrače istom strašću i djeluju na čitatelja zajedničkim zavođenjem, to jest rađanjem njegove želje. U traženju podudarnosti preko „hijata” između označenog i označitelja, između jezika i osjećaja, M. Duras pjesnikinja je razlike, ali i suglasja (analogija) koja struje *međuprostorom* između subjekta i objekta želje u *pismu* kao i u govoru. Jer pitanje svih pitanja povezano s tzv. „ženskim” pismom (koje je po definiciji

## Paradoxical or border writing

“Writing is a bridge over an abyss.” M. Duras

This kind of development in Duras’ opus, akin to a research on the dual concept of evolution and involution, modern and anti-modern, progression and regression, can be succinctly expressed by using a poetic concept: the aforementioned “border writing”. It is typical of the art of historical and cultural transitions such as those of romanticism and symbolism, especially the latter, “feminine” and neo-feminist one, which found its various poetic versions in the work of M. Duras. The writer herself was perplexed by her path: at some point, she no longer “recognized” herself as she had been in her early phase, which she now considered as too “talkative”, literal, discursive, and “male”. With her short lyrical novel *Moderato Cantabile* (1958), she consciously opted for the literature of “doing” (*du faire*) rather than “saying” (*du dire*), whereby “doing” implied a high degree of reduction, symbolism, and performativity, as well as subdued constructivism. It meant enhancing the identity of her innate “female nature”, her essentialism, combined with a “deconstruction” (Derrida) of asymmetric gender history and existentialism. Gender differences as a social construct – as understood by S. de Beauvoir – was for M. Duras inseparable from a belief in the existence of a far broader and inclusive difference, only subsequently experienced as primarily sexualized:

here one can observe an interesting attempt at synthesizing two opposed neo-feminist and anthropological theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Paradoxical and utterly reserved writing, accompanied by a destruction of narration and a “crisis” of the primary, literal meaning, is based – according to Duras – on the repression of female identity and creativity in history. This results in lyrical, poetic art, chiselled in its form yet ambivalent in its content. Although apparently casual, “semicrude” and imperfect, it is actually carefully controlled and measured. It is silent because it opens towards the unsaid, the unconscious, following the asymptote of desire. It omits almost everything that is common in prose, everything that is superfluous, while its structure is reduced to the scheme of a crystal or a skeleton. Corporal sensuality/sensitivity shifts from the level of narrative to that of expression, which has the power to expand and seduce like the best of lyrical poetry. Form and content have become reciprocal metaphors – emanating the same power and acting upon the reader with the same seduction, inciting his or her desire. Searching for coincidence between the signified and the signifier, language and emotion, through the “hiatus”, M. Duras was a poetess of diversity and harmony (analogy), which flow *between* the subject and the object of desire. For the question of all questions in the so-called “feminine” writing (which is by definition poetical, regardless of sex) is not how to experience something, but how to find the words to express desire, passion, and pain, or even think about them. If for

pjesničko bez obzira na spol) nije kako nešto doživjeti, nego kako pronaći riječi za želju, za strast, za bol, ali i za misao o njima. Ako je pisanje M. Duras doista odraz poetike tranzicije između dviju kulturnih i antropoloških epoha, ono je također pismo latentnih *razlika u kontaktu i interakciji*, još nedefiniranog, pluralnog identiteta što se oblikuje u zoni prelijevanja kao rubno i kružno, palindromsko i dijaloško pismo budućnosti.

Dramska napetost teksta rađa se tako u oscilaciji između topološki približenih i suprotstavljenih razlika – muškog i ženskog, Istoka i Zapada, žudnje i boli, materijalnog i duhovnog... unatoč privlačnoj sili koja ih povezuje. Međutim, unatoč svojoj raznolikosti, prikriveno (*en pointillé*) jedinstvo ovog stvaralaštva brzo će se ukazati čitatelju. Ono je uvijek dvoznačno, pozitivno i negativno, plod suprotnih pulzija smrti i erosa, kritičkog osporavanja suvremenog svijeta i afirmacije života kao takvog. Velika nježnost prema bićima i stvarima ide pod ruku s utopijskom težnjom za promjenom postojećeg „svijeta života“, za njegovim „popravljanjem“. Nihilističke težnje izgredničke revolucionarnosti, ali bez vidljivoga pozitivnog programa, smjenjuju se s gotovo pobožnom odanošću postojanju kao takvom i „bratstvu ljudi u svemiru“. Težnja „svebiću“ u kojem je čovjek tek čestica sveukupnog kozmosa kao da je krajnji cilj ove za individualistički Zapad sasvim osebujne askeze. To poniranje do biti, do središnjeg načela

jedinstva bitka i nebitka, prolaznog i vječnoga, iskazuje se na tematskom planu u erotskoj strasti i njezinu htonskom obnavljanju, u trajnim ciklusima rađanja i nestajanja Istoga. Diskontinuitet koji vlada unutar opusa i teksta znak je prolaznosti bića i transformacije subjekta, dok je kontinuitet znak vječnosti bitka i kolanja žudnje u uvijek novim inkarnacijama. No ustrajno variranje istih tema ljubavi, smrti, pisanja ili boli... nije nipošto nedostatak autorske imaginacije ni puko ponavljanje. Riječ je o spoznavanju i preobrazbama poznato-nepoznatih stanja središnjega ženskog subjekta u svijetu i u vremenu, a tematske konstante pojavljuju se u uvijek novim kombinacijama istih poetičkih elemenata na fabularnoj, naratološkoj ili stilskoj razini. Opus M. Duras ima tako različite faze i slojeve, ali prožimlje ga srodna motivska i ikonografska tematika. Različiti rukopisi i žanrovi, vrste i mediji iskušavaju se u žitkom suodnosu uzajamne privlačnosti koja omekšava njihove kanonske granice te ih čini neodredivima, nestalima i propusnima. Između opusa i pojedinih djela postoji, rekli smo već, implicitan odnos dijelova i cjeline: to je suodnos analogan onome koji spaja inkluzivnost etičkog svjetonazora i njemu protuslovne signale neuključenosti. A strukturalna dvojnost opusa arhipelaga i njegova rasutoga jedinstva oscilira između kontinuiteta sadržine i diskontinuiteta forme: oni su paradoksalni izraz bolno prekinutog protoka žudnje, ali i njezina obnavljanja. Ta dvostruka napetost plusa i

Duras writing is a reflection of the poeticism of tradition between two cultural and anthropological epochs, it is also the writing of latent *differences*, a yet undefined, plural identity that emerges in the zone of overflow as a marginal and circular, palindromic and dialogical writing of the future.

Dramatic tension thus emerges in a text from the oscillation between the topologically close yet opposed differences – male and female, East and West, desire and pain, material and spiritual, despite the forces of attraction that connect them. However, despite their differences, the “punctual” (*en pointillé*) unity of this creation will soon be revealed to the reader. It is always ambiguous, both positive and negative, a fruit of opposing pulsions of death and Eros, a critical rejection of the contemporary world and an affirmation of life as such. Intense tenderness towards beings and things goes hand in hand with a tendency to change the existing “world of life”, to “correct” it. The nihilist tendencies of transgression and revolution, lacking a manifest positive programme, alternate with an almost pious devotion to existence as such and to the “brotherhood of all humans in universe.” A proclivity to “omni-being”, in which man is only a particle in the all-inclusive cosmos, seems to be the final goal of this sort of asceticism, which is rather peculiar for the individualistic West. This immersion down to the very essence, to the central principle of unity between being and non-being, transitory and eternal, is expressed on the thematic level through erotic passion and its

chthonic renewal, in the eternal cycles of birth and disappearance of the Same. Discontinuity within the opus and the text is a sign of the transience of being and the transformation of the subject, while continuity is a sign of the eternity of being and the circulation of desire in continuously new incarnations. However, the persistent variations of the same topics – love, death, writing, or pain – do not result from a deficiency in imagination and are not mere repetitions. They show a growing knowledge and transformations of the familiar-unfamiliar states of the central female subject in the world and in time, and the thematic constants always appear in new combinations of the same poetic elements on the level of the plot, narration, or style. The oeuvre of M. Duras thus shows various phases and layers, yet always suffused with similar motifs and iconographic elements. Various handwritings and genres, types and media, are experimented with in a fluid correlation of mutual attraction, which softens their canonical boundaries and makes them indeterminable, instable, and porous. As mentioned above, an implicit relationship between the parts and the whole can be observed between the oeuvre of M. Duras as a whole and its individual segments: a correlation analogous to the one connecting the inclusiveness of an ethical worldview and the contradictory signs of non-inclusion. And the structural duality of this opus-archipelagos and its dispersed unity oscillates between the continuity of content and the discontinuity of form: they are a paradoxical expression of a painfully interrupted flow of desire as



minusa i u unutrašnjosti je same prirode želje – ona dinamizira međuprostor između subjekta i objekta zavodjenja. Njezina uskrata vodi u osjećaj inhibicije i manjka, a ovi (po Freudu), u najboljem slučaju, izravno u pisanje: želja, njezino klouče i bol nalaze se u metaforičkom suodnosu s pismom.

Kao primjer tematske povezanosti opusa nameće se već na prvi pogled linearna horizontalnost pozitivne pulzije čežnje: to je u prvom redu erotska žudnja prema drugome. No ljubav je prisutna i kao *agape*, *filia* i *caritas* te svi ostali njezini pojavi oblici. Ona je također dubinska intencionalna žudnja prema samorealizaciji subjekta koja će se otkriti u ljubavi ili stvaralaštvu. No istovremeno je prisutna i negativna pulzija samouništaavanja: to pasivno prepuštanje potištenosti, ponekad mazohističko, u početku je prigušeno, kasnije sve izrazitije. Melankolija i tjeskoba posljedice su promašene želje ili nemoći subjekta za samoostvarivanjem (Sartre). Na ruševinama žudnje, na *mrtvom tijelu ljubavi* započinje razaranje memorije i svijeta; njih će, poput lišaja, s vremenom prekriti utjeha pisma. No žudnja i tjeskoba, *eros* i *thanatos*, utopija pisma i njegovo mazohističko samorazaranje nisu samo središnji motivi u opusu M. Duras – bitno je kako oni utjelovljuju duboku logiku teksta, kako uvjetuju njegovu unutrašnju formu i sve višestruke razine značenja i tumačenja. Ključan je odnos razmjene između linearne osi selekcije i vertikalne osi kombinacije: u tekstu

sve počinje kao metonimija, no koja je uvijek već na „putu u metaforu” (Lodge). Na razini priče tako se ponašaju i smeteni ženski likovi koji djeluju *kao da su uvijek na odlasku – ali kamo zapravo?*

Odnos između želje i pisanja te čežnja za drugim kao temelj svakog stvaralačkog čina, taj svojevrsni „zov u prazno”, već su dugo prepoznati i često ih nalazimo u središtu teorijske pozornosti: „pišemo da bismo bili voljeni... mada to vjerojatno nismo”, kaže neponovljivi R. Barthes. Potreba za pisanjem i užitek čitanja imaju s ljubavlju u doslovnom smislu riječi zajedničku „relaciju žudnje za drugim, a koja je temeljni odnos prema Drugome u nama” (Lacan). Međutim, samo pismo ne pruža izlaz. Ono ne osigurava sretan rasplet i zadovoljenje želje, ono samo zatvara žudnju u ciklus znaka. Nadiđena dihotomija, ali bez sinteze, je „oksimoronska fantazija postmodernističkog doba”. Kao što to kaže Tzvetan Todorov u svojoj studiji o Benjaminu Constantu: „Može se bez teškoće ustanoviti duboku vezu između govora i pisma žudnje. Oboje funkcioniraju na istovjetan način. Riječi pretpostavljaju odsutnost stvari, isto kao što žudnja podrazumijeva nedokučivost svoga predmeta (...). Oboje vode u slijepu ulicu, u simulakrum komunikacije, u bezizglednost sreće (...) Riječi se odnose prema stvarima kao žudnja prema objektu žudnje”, ističe on. Unatoč teorijskom pesimizmu, ovdje se osjeća diskurs epohe post-1968.

well as its renewal. This double tension of plus and minus is also at the core of desire as such – it dynamizes the space between the subject of seduction and its object. Its absence leads to the feeling of inhibition and deprivation, which again (according to Freud) leads at best directly into writing: desire, its decline, and pain are in a metaphorical relationship with writing.

As for the thematic coherence of Duras' opus, the linear horizontality of the positive pulsion of desire imposes itself as the most illustrative example: it is primarily an erotic desire for the other, but love is also present as *agape*, *philia*, or *caritas*, as well as in other forms. It also appears as a profound and intentional desire for self-realization, which reveals itself in love or creativity. However, the negative pulsion of self-destruction is there as well: this passive abandonment to depression, sometimes masochistic, is initially subdued and then increasingly overt. Melancholy and anxiety are the consequences of misplaced desire or the subject's inability of self-realization (Sartre). It is on the ruins of desire, the “dead body of love,” where the destruction of memory and the world sets on; with time, the comfort of writing will cover them like moss. Nevertheless, desire and anxiety, Eros and Thanatos, the utopia of writing and its masochistic self-destruction, are not just the central motifs in the opus of M. Duras – what matters is how they embody the deep logic of the text, how they define its inner form and all the multiple levels of meaning and interpretation. What matters is the relationship of exchange between the linear

axis of selection and the vertical axis of combination: in her texts, everything starts as metonymy, yet already “on its way to a metaphor” (Lodge). On the level of the plot, this is also the way in which the confused female characters act, namely “as if they were always about to leave – but where to, actually?”

The relationship between desire and writing, the yearning for the other, as a basis of all creative activity, a sort of “call into the void,” has long been acknowledged and is often in the focus of theorists' attention: “we write to be loved... even though we are probably not” – as the unique R. Barthes once wrote. The need of writing and the joy of reading have something in common literally: it is the “relation of desire for the other, which is the basic relation towards the Other in us” (Lacan). However, writing in itself does not show a way out. It does not guarantee a happy ending or the satisfaction of desire, but merely encloses the latter into the cycle of a sign. The surpassed dichotomy, yet without a synthesis, is an “oxymoronic fantasy of the postmodern era.” As Tzvetan Todorov has argued in his study on Benjamin Constant: “One can easily establish a profound link between the speech and writing of desire. They both function almost in the same way. Words imply a lack, just like desire implies the inaccessibility of its object (...). They both lead to a dead end, a simulacrum of communication and the improbability of happiness (...) Words relate to things as desire relates to the object of desire.” Despite this theoretical pessimism, one senses here the discourse of the post-'68 epoch. The subversive spirit

Subverzivni duh sedamdesetih sažet je u ključnoj riječi „želja” (*le désir*) koja je tada imala politički naboj: „treba željeti nemoguće”. Prisutan je također utjecaj aktualne psihoanalitičke teorije o uzajamnosti libida i stvaralaštva. Ona je ostvariva, ali pod uvjetom da „riječ ne ubije žudnju...” (Lacan): to se onda naziva „pismo”. Međutim, nesukladnost između žudenog i dosegnutog objekta želje ostaje i u pismu, budući da on uvijek ovisi i o imaginaciji subjekta. Žudnja može biti samo na neki manjkav način „ostvarena” (češće je „razočarana”) zato što je neadekvatna u odnosu na ideal. No u prirodi žudnje ionako nije da bude ostvarena, nego da, kao nedosegnuta utopijska nada, vječno titra u uvijek novim oblicima.

U temelju sjetne spoznaje o neostvarivosti ljubavi kao apsoluta moguće je vidjeti i utjecaj budizma u kojem savršenstvo ne postoji, a apsolut je ostvariv jedino u smrti, dok se autorica poziva prije svega na povijesno uvjetovani teorijski i politički pesimizam ženskog roda. No moguće je da melankolija koja prožima likove i fabule M. Duras, kao i samo paradoksalno, dvojak tkivo teksta, vuče podrijetlo, kako to psihoanaliza voli pokazati, od ambivalentnog osjećaja ljubavi, stida i straha koji je kao dijete imala prema majci, „njezinoj ljubavi, njezinoj nesreći”, kako je naziva u romanu *Ljubavnik* (*L'Amant*, 1984.). Ako je vjerovati tom „jedinom autobiografskom romanu”, napornu su majku sva njezina djeca jednako obožavala, no ona je, više od

dvoje mlađe djece, bezuvjetno voljela samo starijeg sina, unatoč njegovoj egoističnoj i divljoj naravi. Odnosi u disfunkcionalnoj obitelji bili su dramatični – majka ima naizmjenične faze depresije i euforije, ravnodušnosti i hiperaktivnosti (primjer je njezina luda ideja da gradi „branu protiv oceana”). Stariji brat Pierre ugnjetava mlađega, Paula, kojeg štiti sestra jer ga voli kao vlastito dijete. U kući vlada šutnja i strah od Pierreova nasilja: obitelj je nijema kao da je okamenjena – „*une famille de pierre*”. No i *filia* je unatoč tome ipak snažno prisutna u cijelom opusu: to je dječja ljubav prema majci ili ljubav majke prema djetetu kao u filmu *Nathalie Granger* (1973.), u romanima *Moderato cantabile* (1958.), *La Pluie d'été* (*Ljetna kiša*, 1990.) i dr., kao ljubav djevojke prema bratu ili prijateljici (*Ljubavnik*). *Caritas* je osjećaj povezan s etikom i čovjekoljubljem: to je sućut i osjećaj solidarnosti sa svima koji pate od nepravde, od nemanja slobode, s potlačenim grupama i poniženim pojedincima s društvenog ruba, neuklopljenima u okolinu (kao što su domoroci u *Brani na Pacifiku* (*Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, 1950.), starica i vozač kamiona u filmu *Le Camion* (1977.), prosjakinja i vicekonzul u istoimenom romanu, pobunjeni brodari u Gdanjsku u *L'été 80* (*Ljeto '80*, 1980.) kao i mnogi drugi... Unatoč političkom zalaganju za preraspodjelu moći i socijalnu pravičnost, autorica zna da privid slobode i dostupnosti cijelome svijetu u doba medijske i digitalne umreženosti ne znače ništa

of the 1970s is summarized in the keyword “desire” (*le désir*), which was politically charged at the time: “one should desire the impossible.” One also senses the presence of the then current psychoanalytical theory on the mutual dependence of libido and creativity. It is realizable, but only on condition that “words should not kill desire” (Lacan): and then it is called “writing”. However, the incongruence between the desired and reached object of desire remains in writing as well, since it always also depends on the subject’s imagination. Desire can be “realized” only in a deficient way (and is more often “frustrated”), since this realization is inadequate compared to the ideal. But it is anyway not in the nature of desire to be realized; as an inaccessible, utopian hope, it must always pulsate in new forms.

In the foundations of the melancholic insight on the unrealizable nature of love as an absolute, one can also notice the impact of Buddhism, in which perfection does not exist and the absolute can only be attained in death, but the author refers primarily to the historically determined pessimism of the female sex. It is also possible that the melancholy that permeates the characters and plots of M. Duras, as well as the paradoxical, dual texture of the text as such, originates – as psychoanalysis likes to show – in the ambivalent feeling of love, shame, and fear that she felt as a child towards her mother: “her love and her sorrow” as she calls her in her novel *Lover* (*L'Amant*, 1984). If we are to trust that “only autobiographic novel” of Duras, the difficult mother was equally

adored by all her children, but she unconditionally loved only her elder son at the cost of the two younger children, despite his egoistic and wild nature. Relationships were dramatic in this dysfunctional family – the mother suffered alternating phases of depression and euphoria, indifference and hyperactivity (an example being her crazy idea to built a “sea wall”). The elder brother, Pierre, tormented the younger one, Paul, whom the sister protected as she loved him as her own child. The house was dominated by silence and fear of Pierre’s violent behaviour: the family kept mute as if petrified – “*une famille de pierre*”. But despite that, *philia* is still powerfully present in the entire opus of M. Duras, be it as the child’s love for the mother or the mother’s for the child, as in the film *Nathalie Granger* (1973) or the novels *Moderato Cantabile* (1958) and *Summer Rain* (*La Pluie d'été*, 1990), or the girl’s love for her brother or her friend (*The Lover*). *Caritas* is an emotion usually associated with ethics and altruism: it is empathy and a feeling of solidarity with anyone suffering injustice or lack of freedom, with oppressed groups and humiliated individuals from the margins of the society, who do not fit into their environment (like the natives from *The Sea Wall* (*Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, 1950), the old woman and the truck driver in *The Truck* (*Le Camion*, 1977), the beggar and the vice-consul in the novel of the same name, the rebellious shippers in Gdansk in the *Summer '80* (*L'été 80*, 1980), and many others. Despite the fact that she politically endorsed a redistribution of power and social

bez ekonomske i društvene slobode: oni ostaju tek iluzija odnosa i zajedništva u tom virtualnom povezivanju na daljinu (koje već najavljuje ljubavni kontakt telefonom i „minitelom“ u drami *Le Navire „night“* (1978.), što već ima neku sličnost s pisanjem – i čitanjem).

Što se tiče one najživotnije ljubavi koja se pojavljuje u obliku erotske želje i strasti u ljudskom paru, ta je uvijek usko povezana sa smrću, kao što je to i žudnja s melankolijom. Ako je pismo trag bivše (smrtne) žudnje, ono je također znak one „besmrtne“, donekle ovjekovječene. Put od uskrate žudnje do njezine sublimacije i konverzije u pismo temeljna je okosnica cijelog ovog opusa; pismo ustrajava na samom mjestu te preobrazbe, ono čini njegovo samoodraženo jedinstvo i nemirni sklad. Stvari, kao i objekt žudnje, funkcioniraju u odsutnosti. Zbiljno nije *model* fikcije, nego njezin posrednik; ona je *simulakrum*, „skretnica“ koja najprije razdvaja nesvjesno u čovjeku od samog čina pisanja, a prije nego što ih priliubi jedno uz drugo. I žudnja i pismo ukazuju se tako kao oblici izvanjštene opsesije ili pak unutrašnjeg egzila. Oni se uspostavljaju na temelju neke bolne odsutnosti, naglo nastale praznine koju pismo tek treba riječima „oivičiti“ i time pretvoriti afekt u simbolički krajolik, sliku ili znak: *pisati znači tražiti izvan samoga sebe ono što već nosimo unutar nas*, s pravom smatra M. Duras. Dok intencionalna želja potiče književnu produkciju već u

njezinu zametku, erotska želja u doslovnom značenju, ali i kao sinegdoha općenitije žudnje za životom igra neizmjerljivo veliku ulogu u semiotici cijeloga opusa. Ona mu osigurava semantičko širenje, daje značenjsku intenzivnost. Jer iako je „sve znak u ljubavi“, nju se tako dugo dok je proživljavamo teško može iskazati, jedino naknadno. „Htjeti ispisati ljubav znači suočiti se s neuspjehom jezika: to je područje sluđenosti u kojem je jezik istodobno i suvišan i manjkav“, kaže Barthes. Odatle dolazi bez sumnje ona sjetna nijemost durasovskih likova, njihov napor koji posustaje pred nemogućnošću da budu spoznati i prepoznati od drugoga. Ovdje nije riječ o sukobu ljubavi i samoljublja kao kod Racinea, Baudelairea ili Prousta, o klasičnoj emocionalnoj ljuljački viška ili manjka emocija, mada bi se moglo reći da se klasični manirizam i poetska šutljivost M. Duras sastaju u istom blokiranju komunikacije, jer viša sila afekta strasti prijeti biću na velikoj dubini i izbacuje ga iz kolotečine. No s druge strane, to pismo na rubu afazije i mûka moglo bi doista biti ne odraz, nego metafora rodne povijesne frustracije, one vjekovne šutnje silom nametnute ženama. Ono je koliko tragični znak njihove odsutnosti iz pisane povijesti čovječanstva, toliko možda i eshatološki, milenijski *spleen*. No kako god bilo, to je prije svega autoričin svjestan estetski izbor, traženje nove poetike za novi doživljaj svijeta: ona je „ženska“ koliko i autorska, samosvjesna, osobna.

equity, Duras was aware of the fact that the apparent freedom and its global accessibility in the age of medial and digital networking does not mean anything without economic freedom: it remains a mere illusion of relationships and community in these virtual links at a distance. That is announced as early as the love contacts by telephone and “minitel” in her drama *The Ship “Night”* (*Le Navire Night*, 1978), contacts that already resembled writing. As for the liveliest kind of love, which takes the form of erotic desire and passion in a human couple, it is always closely related to death, just like passion is always related to melancholy. While writing is a trace of previous (mortal) desire, it is also a trace of the “immortal” and – to some extent – eternalized love. The way from deprivation of desire to its sublimation and conversion into writing is the main axis of Duras’ opus as a whole: writing persists in the very place of that transformation; it makes up its self-reflexive unity. Things, same as the object of desire, function in absence. The real is not a *model* for fiction, but rather its mediator; it is a *simulacrum*, a “switch” that first separates the unconscious in a human being from the very act of writing and then joins them to one another. Desire and writing thus appear as two forms of externalized obsession or internal exile. They are established on the basis of a painful absence, a sudden void that writing can only “circumscribe” with words, thus turning the affect into a symbolic landscape, image, or sign: “writing means searching beyond ourselves what we already carry within,” as M. Duras once lucidly observed.

Whereas intentional desire inspires literary production in its very essence, erotic desire, literally or as a synecdoche for a more general desire for life, plays a huge role in the semiotics of Duras’ opus. It ensures its semantic expansion and endows it with semantic intensity. For although “everything is a sign in love,” it can barely be put into words as long as we are in the midst of it: we can do it only subsequently. “To try to write love is to confront the *muck* of language: that region of hysteria where language is both *too much* and *too little*, excessive (...) and impoverished,” as Barthes wrote. This is undoubtedly the origin of that melancholic silence of Duras’ characters, their efforts that fail because of the inability to get noticed and acknowledged by the other. It is not about a conflict between love and self-love, as with Racine, Baudelaire, or Proust, a classical emotional seesaw balancing the surplus and lack of emotions, even though one might say that the classical mannerism and poetic silence of M. Duras do meet in the same communication blockage, since a higher force of the affect of passion threatens the being at a great depth and derails it. On the other hand, writing on the verge of aphasia and silence could indeed be a metaphor for that historical gender-conditioned frustration, that centuries-long silence violently forced upon women, rather than its reflection. It is as much a tragic sign of their absence from the written history of humanity as an eschatological, millennial *spleen*. Be it as it may, it is first of all the author’s conscious aesthetic choice, a quest for new poeticism

## Žudnja u tekstu – putanje strasti u vremenu

„Nijedna ljubav na svijetu ne može nadomjestiti Ljubav.” M. Duras

Ljubav kao počelo filozofije, kao prva u nizu „onto-emocija” (izraz je, koliko znam, moj), najveća je snaga za sučeljavanje s tjeskobom i smrću. Energija ljubavi i seksualna energija dvije su najjače energije u čovjeku. No da su i u emotivnom, a ne samo tjelesnom pogledu muškarci i žene različiti, znao je još drevni taoizam. Tako se svojem „odraslom”, odgovornom moralu M. Duras zalaže za autentičnost želje općenito, a posebno za ostvarenje osjećajne i tjelesne istine sebe kao žene. Ona time postaje subjekt svoje osobne, a ne tuđom, „muškom” kulturom ili interesom posredovane želje. Kroz cijeli bogati opus možemo tako pratiti („žensku”) žudnju, u raznim etapama njezine polagane kristalizacije u pismo, kao novi odnos emocija, tijela i jezika. Dvoglasje „istine tijela i istine jezika” velika je pustolovina ovog pjesništva, a opet na tragu Racinea, Rimbauda, Baudelairea, Prousta. Kao i kod njih, pismo je podignuto na razinu metafore sljublivanja bića s bitkom, imanencije s transcendencijom. Ljubav i pismo hrane se istom energijom, ali s odmakom u fazi i na razdaljini: njihov je suodnos i zbiljan i imaginaran i simbolički kao odnos uzajamnih metafora. Neka lelujava čežnja još prije same žudnje čini temeljno

raspoloženje prvih romana. Ona preobražava stvarnost, daje novu dimenziju stvarima. Ta neodređena čežnja, ta mlada i još nerazbudena senzualnost daje iluziju intenziteta životu glavnih likova i onda kad se još ništa ne događa. Ona poput emocionalne alkemije preobražava svijet: čovjekov je život bogat onoliko koliko je velika njegova žudnja. Mala junakinja *Ljubavnika* kaže za sebe da je *imala lice žudnje još prije nego što je upoznala užitek*. A mladi lovac na pantere, njezin brat Joseph, nestrpljivo čeka da ga ljubav dođe spasiti. Činjenica je da se prvi tekstovi M. Duras još drže izvjesne psihološke realnosti i mimetičkog predočavanja „zbilje”. Međutim, kasnije će priča postupno bivati sve praznija, sve implicitnija, postat će s vremenom tek otisak priče u odsutnosti. Pismo će se kretati prema šutnji, ali žudnja time neće slabjeti, nego naprotiv. Njezina će snaga na kraju gotovo posve dokinuti jezik pa i samo pismo: *Kakva ljubav apsolutna, smrtna*, kaže nevidljivi „Glas” u *offu* u filmu *India Song*, dok se riječi „šutnja” ili „tišina” (*silence*) nebrojeno puta ponavljaju same u praznini stranice. Rečenicu su ovdje zamijenile imenice. Riječi rijetke i apsolutne, osamljene su kao matematički simboli, nesvodive poput prirodnih brojeva. One se izdvajaju iz cjeline, prizivaju slike, sažimlju zbivanje i naraciju, ali ih ne brišu, nego nagovještavaju. Riječi naliježu poput stiha na bjelinu stranice u nekoj vrsti emocionalnog zova što se sugestivno širi na sve strane, slično kao što se to događa u

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for a new vision of the world: it is “feminine” as much as artistic, self-assured, and personal.

### Desire in text – trajectories of passion

“No love in this world can replace Love.” M. Duras

Love as the first principle of philosophy, and the first in the line of “onto-emotions” (my own term, as far as I know), is the most powerful force in dealing with anxiety and death. Love energy and sexual energy are the strongest in human beings. But it has been known since ancient Taoism that men and women are different not only physically, but also emotionally. Thus, in her “adult”, responsible morality, M. Duras endorses the authenticity of desire in general and her own realization of emotional and physical truth as a woman in particular. In this way, she becomes the subject of her own, rather than someone else’s, “male” culture or an object of interest for mediated desire. Throughout her rich opus one can thus follow (“female”) desire in various stages of its gradual crystallization into writing, as a new relationship between emotions, the body, and language. The duet of “the truth of the body and the truth of language” is the great adventure of her poetry, reminiscent of Racine, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and Proust. Similar to them, this writing has been raised to the level of a metaphor of merging being

with Being, immanence with transcendence. Love and writing feed on the same energy, only with a delay in phases and at a distance: their correlation is both real and imaginary, and symbolical as a relationship between reciprocal metaphors.

Some sort of oscillating yearning, which even precedes desire, makes up the basic mood of the early novels. It transforms the reality and gives a new dimension to things. This indefinite yearning, this young and yet unawakened sensuality, endows the life of the main protagonists with an illusion of intensity even when nothing actually happens to them. It transforms life like emotional alchemy: man’s life is as rich as the intensity of his desire. The little heroine in *The Lover* says about herself that “she had a face of desire even before she learned about pleasure.” And the young panther hunter, her brother Joseph, waits impatiently for love to come and save him. Indeed, the early works of M. Duras still cling to some sort of psychological reality and mimetic representation of the “actual” situation. However, her plots would become emptier and more implicit with time, like a mere offprint of plots in their absence. Writing would move towards silence, yet desire would not be weakened in the process: quite the contrary. Eventually, its power would abolish language and even writing altogether: “What an absolute, mortal love,” says an invisible background voice in *India Song*, and the word “silence” is repeated many times alone, in the emptiness of a page. Sentences have been replaced by nouns. Words that are rare and absolute, solitary like mathematical

lirskoj pjesmi. Te izdvojene, moćne riječi potresaju čitatelja ili ga zbunjuju, ali ga ne mogu ostaviti ravnodušnim, jer iskazuju ono što se svakoga dana zbiva, a što je istodobno beznačajno i tako strašno. Ta je žudnja brutalna jer teži radikalnom ostvarenju dubinskoga Ja, ali često uz cijenu inhibicije subjekta, jer nijedna ljubav na svijetu ne može nadomjestiti Ljubav, kako kaže pjesnikinja kratko i bezuvjetno. Ali da s druge strane „savršena ljubav ubija” slutili su s njom i André Breton i Paul Eluard.

U romanu *La Vie tranquille* (Miran život, 1944.), drugom romanu spisateljice, neodređena žudnja mlade Françoise, u početku bez cilja, usredotočit će se na mladića Tiènea. To osvježavanje žudnje poklapa se s novospostavljenom sviješću o sebi i s tek prepoznatom istinom njezine ženskosti koju ona smatra mudrošću mudrijom od mene i koja bolje od mene zna što ja hoću... Od pasivne virtualnosti, od odsutnoga „zen-vegetiranja” (prolazeći kroz kolovoz bila sam ništa) Françoise, sama na nepoznatoj plaži, otkrit će neopoziv objekt svoje žudnje. Roman se ovdje zaustavlja. Nikada kod M. Duras nećemo vidjeti život para kako traje u vremenu: kao da ljubav i nema budućnosti ili kao da je ta budućnost nužno razočaravajuća. U tom ranom, još pomalo nesigurnom romanu spoznaja o žudnji poklapa se sa spoznajom subjekta o sebi i s njom se poistovjećuje. Ovdje je djevojačka želja za identitetom pokazana kao erotska, pozitivna, razotuđujuća i bitna.

Čežnja mladažne junakinje Suzanne iz *Brane na Pacifiku*,

romana koji tvori prvi dio autobiografskog, tzv. „indonezijskog diptiha”, koji će 34 godine kasnije zatvoriti *Ljubavnik*, još nema svoj objekt kojemu bi težila. Žudnja rasuta svijetom kupa svojim „ridim svjetlom” džunglu i žitka rižišta, popodnevna kupanja u rijeci, a posebno prašnjavi drum gdje djevojka vrebala dolazak nepoznatog lovca koji će nalikovati poput blizanca njezinu bratu Josephu. Žudnja osamljenih adolescenata na rubu vijetnamske džungle sva je još u očekivanju „one prave”: nju najavljuju njezine metonimije kao što je novi gramofon i čeznutljivi šlager Ramona (= roman?) ili filmski poljupci u kinu ili, za brata, sve raspoložive žene u bijeloj koloniji i najljepše domorotkinje. Ta raspršena senzualnost nagovještaj je sreće, onakve kakva bi ona bila da je moguća. Ova apsurdna i divlja nježnost, taj višak životnosti, prethodnik je pobune, bijega i odvajanja od majke. Ona je već na putu da se prepozna kao erotska, kao seksualna. Nejasna čežnja sestre i brata pretvara se ponekad u incestuozan odnos, stvaran ili imaginaran, kao u djelima *Agatha* (1981.) s aluzijom na R. Musila ili *La pluie d'été*. To su fikcije vjerojatno na tragu autobiografskog iskustva, ali funkcioniraju kao simbolička varijanta nemoguće, neostvarive, apsolutne ljubavi gdje se *eros* i *agape*, zajednička prošlost iz djetinjstva i sadašnjost želje sastaju s teškim kršenjem tabua. Osuđena vetom, žudnja rađa osamljenost i pobunu: očekujući da život „poprimi oblik”, djeca iz *Brane na Pacifiku* žele otići od majke, kao da se majčinska

symbols, are irreducible like the natural numbers. They separate themselves from the whole, evoke images, and summarize the action and the narration – yet announcing rather than erasing them. Words settle on the whiteness of the page like verses, in a sort of emotional call that expands suggestively in all directions, same as in lyrical poetry. These isolated, powerful words move or confuse the reader, yet they cannot leave him indifferent, since they express “something that occurs every day and is meaningless and so terrifying at the same time.” This desire is brutal, as it tends to realize the profound Self radically, often at the cost of inhibition of the subject, since “no love in this world can replace Love,” as the poetess states briefly and unconditionally. But the fact that “perfect love kills” was also sensed by André Breton and Paul Eluard.

In *Quiet Life* (*La Vie tranquille*, 1944), M. Duras' second novel, Françoise's indefinite desire, initially aimless, eventually focuses on the young man Tiène. This objectification of desire coincides with the girl's new awareness of herself and her newly acknowledged truth of her femininity, which she considers to be “wisdom that is wiser than me and knows better than me what I want...” From passive virtuality, from absently vegetating in a “Zen” state of mind (“passing through the August, I was nothing”), Françoise discovers the irrevocable object of her desire on an unfamiliar beach. The novel stops here. In Duras' novels, one never sees the life of a couple actually happening: it is as if love had no future or

perhaps this future is necessarily disappointing. In this early, still somewhat insecure novel, the knowledge of desire coincides with the subject's knowledge of herself and is identified with it. The girl's desire for an identity is presented as erotic, positive, disalienating, and essential.

The desire of young Suzanne from *The Sea Wall*, the first novel in the autobiographical “Indonesian diptych” that would close 34 years later with *The Lover*, has yet no object that she could yearn for. Desire dispersed throughout the world bathes in its “reddish light” the jungle and the watery rice fields, the afternoon swims in the river, and especially the dusty road where the girl is lurking for an unknown hunter that would resemble her brother Joseph like a twin. The desire of lonely adolescents on the verge of Vietnam's jungle is still entirely in the expectation of “the real one”: it is announced by its metonymies, such as the new record player and the melancholy tune *Ramona* (= *roman*?), kisses on the cinema screen, or – for the brother – “all the available women in the white colony and the prettiest among the natives.” This dispersed sensuality is an annunciation of happiness, the way it would be were it only possible. This absurd and wild tenderness, this surplus of liveliness, heralds the rebellion, escape, and separation from the mother. It is already on its way of becoming acknowledged as erotic, sexual. The vague yearning of sister and brother occasionally turns into an incestuous relationship, real or imaginary, like in *Agatha* (1981) with its reminiscences of



ljubav ispriječila između njih i života, kao da im brani da i oni dobiju „svoj dio sreće”. A ta majka, čas potištena, čas euforična, na kraju romana, iznurena tjeskobom, samozatajno umire, kao da želi djeci napokon dati slobodu.

Roman *Miran život* bio je seoska drama, a *Brana na Pacifiku* društveno angažirana epopeja s antikolonijalističkom porukom, više nego što su bili ljubavni romani. Naprotiv, *Gibraltarski mornar* (*Le Marin de Gibraltar*, 1952.), kao i gotovo sva ostala kasnija djela, *Moderato cantabile*, *Zanesenost Lole V. Stein* (*Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, 1964.), *Vicekonzul* (*Le Vice-consul*, 1965.), *Ljubavnik*, da spomenemo samo one najvažnije, bit će priče građene u potpunosti na problematici žudnje, strasti ili pohare koja iza njih ostaje. U *Gibraltarskom mornaru* ljubav postaje po prvi put tema koja generira ne samo motiv nego i samu strukturu djela. Ona se, što je inače rijetko, doista i ostvaruje u tom simboličkom, „pomorskom” romanu koji je komponiran kao u kontrapunktu od dva različita, tek djelomično sljubljena dijela, prvog „kopnenog” i drugog „morskoga”. Amerikanka Anna, bogata vlasnica bijele mjesečarske jahte, nalik je pomalo Suzanne iz *Brane na Pacifiku* koja je sada odrasla. To je strasna mlada žena, na putu oslobođenja od svih konvencija, ali ujedno i zatvorena u svojoj fiksnoj ideji da nađe odbjeglog mornara legionara u kojeg je zaljubljena. Po stupnju samosvijesti i slobode ona je preteča Anne-Marie

Stretter, junakinje *Vicekonzula* i filma *India Song*. Ali Anna nije nimalo nujna – ona usput sebi bira pomagača u lovu na „rijetku divljač” ljubavi. Njezina strast, doživljena ili sanjana, izbjeći će na taj način sumnjivu sudbinu koja prijeti svakom ostvarenju, sačuvati će mladost neutažene čežnje. A nova ljubav, manje otuđujuća, niknut će u žarkoj brazdi one prve. Fiksna Annina ideja (mit, fantazma ili metafora apsolutne strasti) ne sprječava je da uživa u životu i da se nada. Ona još nije ni blizu očajanju koje prijeti ostalim durasovskim junakinjama. *Gibraltarski mornar* jest roman sreće, jedini u opusu, neka vrsta alegorijske bajke za odrasle. *Les petits chevaux de Tarquinia* (*Tarkvinijski konjići*, 1973.), naprotiv, roman je koji nam pokazuje, što je rijetko, sudbinu ljubavi u bračnom životu, i to kroz iskustvo dvaju parova na prvom poslijeratnom ljetovanju negdje na sparušenoj talijanskoj obali. To je iskustvo razočaravajuće i svodi se na poznavanje, uostalom posve relativno, partnera kao onog drugoga. *Nikoga neću nikada poznavati bolje*, kaže u sebi Sara gledajući s leđa svojega muža – i shvaća kako nema smisla da se upusti u novu vezu što je za trenutak zaiskrila nadom. Priča razotkriva ne samo predvidljivo otrježenje u ljubavi koja još traje, nego u njoj čak i erotska avantura gubi svoju auru i tone u banalnost. Ona je ovdje tek rekvizit ljetovanja, a ne ključna zgoda u životu koja pokreće krizu kao što će se to dogoditi već u idućim djelima *Moderato cantabile* ili u scenariju za film Alaina

R. Musil, or in *Summer Rain*. These fictions are probably to some extent autobiographical, yet function as a symbolic variant of impossible, unrealizable, absolute love, where *eros* and *agape*, a common childhood past, and the present desire encounter heavy violation of a taboo. Thwarted by the prohibition, desire gives birth to loneliness and rebellion: while waiting for their life to “take shape”, the children from *The Sea Wall* want to leave their mother, as if maternal love had come between themselves and life, as if it were preventing them from getting “their share of happiness.” And the mother, alternating between depression and euphoria, dies quite discreetly at the end of the novel, exhausted by anxiety, as if wishing to give the long-awaited freedom to her children.

The novel *Quiet Life* may be considered a rural drama and *The Sea Wall* a socially engaged epos with an anticolonial message, rather than love novels. As opposed to that, *The Sailor from Gibraltar* (*Le Marin de Gibraltar*, 1952) and almost all later works of M. Duras, such as *Moderato Cantabile*, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein* (*Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, 1964), *The Vice-Consul* (*Le Vice-consul*, 1965), and *The Lover*, to mention only the essential ones, were stories built completely on the theme of desire, passion, and devastation they leave behind. In *The Sailor from Gibraltar*, love first appeared as a theme that generated not only the motif, but also the very structure of the novel. Love even gets realized in this symbolic, “naval” novel, which seems to consist of two opposed novels, loosely connected, a “land” novel and a “sea” novel.

Anna, the rich American owner of a somnambulist white yacht, is somewhat like Suzanna from *The Sea Wall*, only grown up. She is a passionate young woman, on her way to break free from all conventions, yet also trapped in her fixation that she should find an escaped sailor-legionary whom she loves. In her confidence and freedom, she heralds Anne-Marie Stretter, heroine from *The Vice-Consul* and *India Song*. But Anna is not in a hurry – she even takes a helper as she hunts down that “rare wild animal” of love. Her passion, experienced or dreamed, will therefore escape the doubtful fate that awaits all realization and preserve the youthfulness of unfulfilled desire. And the new love, less alienated, will spring up from the burning burrow of the first. Anna’s fixation (the myth, phantasm, or metaphor of absolute passion) does not prevent her from enjoying her life or from hoping. She is not even close to despair as other Duras’ heroines. *The Sailor from Gibraltar* is a novel of happiness, perhaps the only one in her opus, a sort of allegorical fairy-tale for grownups. *The Little Horses of Tarquinia* (*Les petits chevaux de Tarquinia*, 1973), on the other hand, is a rare novel showing the fate of love in marriage: through the experience of two couples on their first postwar holiday somewhere on the scorched Italian coast. The experience is disappointing and comes down to getting to know one’s partner as the Other, albeit relatively. “I will never know anyone better than him,” Sara says to herself while looking at the back of her husband – and realizes that it does not even pay to start an affair, which was a spark of hope for a



Resnaisa *Hiroshima, ljubavi moja* (*Hiroshima mon amour*, 1959.). U romanima *Brana na Pacifiku* i *Gibraltarski mornar* žudnja je još bila znak života. S *Moderatom cantabile* i *Hiroshimom* ona dolazi u opasnu blizinu smrti, postaje znak društvene ili seksualne transgresije te napokon znak totalnog iskoraka i ludila. U vrlo hermetičnoj lirskoj prozi *L'Amour* (Ljubav, 1971.) žudnja anonimnih, amneziranih likova ne poznaje više pojam para ni pripadnosti, nego je umnožena, kružna, kolektivna, heteroseksualna i homoseksualna istodobno. Ona je utjelovljeno načelo neostvarivosti kao u nujnom lirskom tekstu *Bolest smrti* (*La maladie de la mort*, 1982.) gdje je riječ o simboličkom sljublivanju tijela, mada bez želje za spajanjem. Ali prije nego što se donde dospjelo, trebalo je proći očajanjem. Frustrirana žudnja Lole V. Stein, kojoj je fatalna „žena s Gangesa” Anne-Marie Stretter preotela zaručnika u noći bala na obali mora, u mjesnom kasinu gradića S. Tahla (Thalassa?), postat će uzrok njezina ludila. Neuslišana i prezrena vicekonzulova žudnja u istoimenom romanu prouzrokovat će njegovu društvenu smrt i simbolično samoubojstvo. On krikovima izvikuje ime svoje ljubavi u sladostrasnom samoponiženju što odjekuje poput eksplozije na primanju u „bijelom svetištu” francuske ambasade u Calcutti. Objekt njegove žudnje, lijepa i sjetna Anne-Marie Stretter, ambasadorova žena, nestaje u Gangesu ubrzo nakon susreta s njim, mada već dugo pati od neizlječive ravnodušnosti

prema samoj sebi do koje ju je, navodno, dovela „bijeda Indije” i „melankolija”. Psihoteični je vicekonzul katalizator njezine potajne žudnje za smrću i bolno srodna duša. Taj „neizrecivi djevac”, taj depresivni fetišist s falsetom i ubojica gubavaca iz Lahorea nešto pokreće u ambasadorici s kojom se namah povezuje. Poput Chauvina u *Moderatu cantabile*, on u njoj priziva na površinu nešto kobno a da ne znamo je li to sloboda, fantazma smrti ili – pobjeda njegove želje nad njom: jer *željeti nekoga već odmah znači biti mu sličan*.

U prirodi je žudnje naime nastrano lukavstvo da gomila i traži zapreke za svoje ostvarenje, smatra Denis de Rougemont u svojem već klasičnom djelu *Ljubav i Zapad*. Međutim, želja kod M. Duras ne živi od zapreka niti ih ne traži. Ona nosi sama u sebi svoju smrt i od nje je nerazdruživa, kao što su to dan i noć, svjetlo i sjena, bitak i nebitak još za trajanja života. Ljubav je zato povlašteni prostor semiotičkog kodiranja i tumačenja – sve što se zbiva znak je o njoj ili za nju, još puno prije nego što postane figura pisma. Kao i pisanje, kao umjetnost, ona je istodobno i komunikacija i samokomunikacija: ona je svjetovna, ovozemaljska transcendencija. Kao *most prebačen preko vječnosti...* Ljubav je više slutnja svetoga nego nadomjestak Boga. Zahvaljujući uvjerenju da na Zemlji unatoč svemu postoji *Ordo amoris*, kohezivni poredak ljubavi, filozofska antropologija (M. Scheler) vidi u Čovjeku presliku kozmosa u malom. Njih povezuju

moment. The story not only reveals the predictable sobering up in a love relationship that is still ongoing, but even deprives the erotic adventure of its aura and lets it sink into banality. It is a mere prop on a holiday, rather than a key episode in life that would trigger a crisis, as it will happen in the following novel *Moderato Cantabile* or the script for Alain Resnais' film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959). In *The Sea Wall* and *The Sailor from Gibraltar*, desire is still a sign of life. With *Moderato Cantabile* and *Hiroshima mon amour*, it comes dangerously closely to death by becoming a sign of social or sexual transgression, and eventually a sign of total aberration and madness. In the very hermetic lyrical prose work *L'Amour* (1971), the desire of anonymous, amnesiac protagonists no longer knows the notion of a couple or belonging to someone; instead, it is multiplied, circular, collective, hetero- and homosexual at the same time. It is the embodied principle of unrealizability, as in the lyrical text *The Malady of Death* (*La maladie de la mort*, 1982), which speaks of a symbolic joining of two bodies without a desire for coming together. But the road to this point was paved by despair. The frustrated desire of Lol V. Stein, whose fiancé was seduced by the fatal “woman of the Ganges”, Anne-Marie Stretter, in the night of the seaside dance at the local casino of S. Thala (Thalassa?), becomes the cause of her insanity. The unfulfilled and spurned desire of the vice-consul in the novel of the same name leads to his social death and a symbolic suicide. He screams out the name of his love in a sensual self-abasement that resounds

like an explosion at the reception in the “white sanctuary” of the French embassy in Calcutta. The object of his desire, the beautiful and melancholic Anne-Marie Stretter, the ambassador's wife, disappeared in the Ganges soon after their encounter, although she had suffered quite a while from an incurable indifference for herself, allegedly caused by the “misery of India” and “melancholy”. The neurotic vice-consul acts like a catalyser for her secret death wish and proves a soul mate in a painful way. This “unspeakable virgin”, a depressed fetishist speaking in a falsetto and the killer or the Lahore lepers, moves something in the ambassador's wife and they instantly relate. Like Chauvin in *Moderato Cantabile*, he brings up something fatal in her, and it remains unclear whether it is freedom, the phantasm of death, or the victory of his desire for her: for “desiring someone already means coming closer to that person.” Desire, namely, hides in its very nature some sort of perverse cunning in which it accumulates and seeks obstacles to its fulfilment, as Denis de Rougemont stated in his classical work *Love in the Western World*. However, in Duras' novels desire does not feed on obstacles or even seeks them. It carries its own death within and is inseparable from it like day and night, light and shade, being and non-being during the lifetime. Love is therefore a privileged space of semiotic encoding and interpretation – all that happens is a sign about it, or for it, far before it becomes a figure of writing. Same as writing or art, it is communication and self-communication at the same time: it is a mundane,

simboličke podudarnosti, to jest cijela mreža spoznajno-organicičkih metafora za nerazdvojjnost materije i duha (slično kao za Spinozu ili u Schellingovoj filozofiji prirode). Žudnja je bila obilježena smrću već u lirsko-metafizičkom romanu *Moderato cantabile* kao i u njemu srodnom djelu *U pola jedanaest jedne ljetne večeri* (*Dix heures et demie du soir en été*, 1960.) koje se također temeljilo na jednoj priči unutar priče, na zločinu iz strasti. Ubojstvo je u oba teksta pokazano kao arhetipski, najviši oblik erotske ljubavi. Međutim, smrt od ruke ljubavnika nije samo pulzija smrti ni privatna fantazma, nego je i opet riječ o nemislivom spajanju protuslovlja, koje je moguće samo u smrti. To je erotski, psihološki i ontologijski paradoks, ali i još nešto drugo. Fantazma dolazi do izražaja u *Moderatu* dva puta: prvi put u nasilnoj smrti mlade žene koja ju je navodno bila poželjela i drugi put kad Chauvin na samom kraju knjige saopćava Anni: *Želio bih da ste mrtvi*. Međutim, smrt kao paroksizam ljubavnog užitka nije samo još jedan paradoks durasovske imaginacije, nego je čitak i kao simbolički korelat stvaralaštva. Pjesnikinja tu kao uvijek dovodi u blisku vezu ljubav, smrt i pisanje. Opsesivni prizor poljupca mrtvog tijela ljubavnice možda je figura za početak reminiscencije o minuloj ili samoubijenoj ljubavi, ali i moguća analogija same biti pisma: *Pisanje je poljubac mrtvom tijelu ljubavi*, zagonetna je kao uvijek M. Duras. Bilo kako bilo, *eros* i *thanatos*, taj klasični drevni par, nalaze se u samom temelju

dvojne poetike ovog stvaralaštva i čine nerazlučivu cjelinu s *pismom žudnje*.

Na fabularnom planu, ali i na planu značenja, može se reći da se durasovska lica, budući da i sama sumnjaju u ljubav, nadnose kao u nekom transu nad zločin iz strasti koji je za njih dokaz da apsolutna ljubav-strast ipak postoji, pa makar kroz svoju negaciju, kroz svoju razornu moć. Zato što se s njom poistovjećuju, oni se zanimaju za tragičnu priču koja je zločinu prethodila, rekreiraju je u mašti i ponovno proživljavaju kao svoju. Ovaj „voajerizam” nije oslobodilački, nego zapravo priprema mazohističku scenu rastanka i sloma. „Psihoanalitički” roman *Zanesenost Lol. V. Stein* paroksizam je osujećene žudnje, priča o jednom atentatu na ljubav i potrebi da se u njemu sudjeluje barem kao zatavljeni svjedok nevjere. *Vidjeti ih, samo ih je željela vidjeti, te ljubavnike s Gangesa* protočni je motiv i kraj Loline ljubavne priče nakon odlaska njezina zaručnika u Indiju. Njezina „voajerska žudnja”, već jednom posredovana fantazmom, postaje nova fantazma, i to neizlječiva. Ona želi *gledati, slijediti ih*, te ljubavnike/zločince, stopiti se s njima, biti prisutna. To će se i ostvariti desetak godina kasnije s novim parom koji tvore njezina prijateljice Tatiana Karl i Lolin vlastiti ljubavnik. U recidivu delirija, s njima će, kao u transu, režirati psihodramu po motivima svoje stare opsesije od koje nije nikada niti ozdravila. Poslije će doći do sloma, do prekida svijesti,

earthly transcendence. Like a “bridge cast over eternity,” it is a premonition of the sacred than a substitute for God. Owing to the belief that there is some sort of *Ordo amoris* on the Earth despite everything, philosophical anthropology (M. Scheler) sees Man as a mirror image of the Cosmos and the Cosmos as an analogy of Man. They are connected by symbolic coincidences, a whole network of epistemic-organicist metaphors for the inseparability of matter and spirit (similar to Spinoza or Schelling’s philosophy of nature).

Desire was marked by death already in the lyrical-metaphysical novel *Moderato Cantabile*, as well as the related *Ten-Thirty on a Summer Night* (*Dix heures et demie du soir en été*, 1960), likewise based on a story within a story and a crime of passion. In both texts, murder is shown as the highest, archetypal form of erotic love. However, death by a lover’s hand is not just a pulsion of death or a private phantasm; it is, again, about the unthinkable fusion of contradictions, which is possible only in death. It is an erotic, psychological, and ontological paradox, and even more than that. In *Moderato Cantabile*, phantasm appears twice: first in the violent death of a young woman who allegedly wished for it and then at the very end of the book, when Chauvin tells Anna: “I wish you were dead.” However, death as a paroxysm of erotic pleasure is not just another paradox of Duras’ imagination – it can also be interpreted as a symbolical correlate of creativity. As always, the poetess brings together love, death, and writing. The obsessive

scene of kissing the lover’s dead body may be a figure for the beginning of reminiscence of a past or self-killed love, but possibly also an analogy for the very essence of writing: “writing is a kiss on the dead body of love”, as M. Duras once said, enigmatically as always. Be it as it may, *eros* and *thanatos*, the classical ancient couple, are at the very core of her dual poeticism, inextricably related to the “writing of desire”.

On the level of the plot as well as meaning, one may say that Duras’ protagonists, not believing in love themselves, hover over the crime of passion as if in a trance, since they see it is a proof that there is such a thing as absolute love-passion, even if in its own negation and destructive power. Since they identify themselves with it, they are interested in the tragic story that preceded the crime, recreating it in their imagination and re-enacting it as their own. This “voyeurism” in fantasy is not liberating, but rather a prelude for a masochistic scene of separation and breakdown. The “psychoanalytical” *Ravishing of Lol Stein* is a paroxysm of thwarted desire, a story of an assassination of love and the need to participate in it, even if as a petrified witness of adultery. “To see them, she only wanted to see them, those lovers from the Ganges” – this is the repeated motif and the end of Lol’s love story after her fiancé’s departure for India. The “voyeuristic desire” of Lol V. Stein, first mediated by a phantasm, becomes a phantasm itself, moreover an incurable one. She wants to “watch them, follow them,” those lovers-transgressors, to merge

do mentalne anoreksije i ludila, do praga iza kojeg prestaje postojati sjećanje na ljubav i na izdaju pa, napokon, i samo pamćenje kao takvo (*L'Amour*). Za junakinje *Ljubavi*, *Žene s Gangesa*, *Zanesenosti Lole V. Stein* nema više uspomena. Kod njih je žudnja dva puta umrla, jer istinska smrt, kao i za Prousta, sastoji se u zaboravu samog zaborava ljubavi, u zaboravu da je ona ikada uopće postojala. Bolnije od očajanja koje bi možda moglo biti još neki oblik nade, to mirno ludilo, ta razdvojenost od sebe i svojega pamćenja, znači svršetak i kraj. Na razvalinama žudnje sada može započeti razaranje svijeta ali i rađanje, iz kaosa, „maglovite cjeline” pisma.

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with them, to be present. This desire is fulfilled ten years later, with a new couple, that of her friend Tatiana Karl and Lol's own lover. In the recurrent delirium, she then stages a psychodrama together with them, as if in a trance, following the motifs of her own obsession that she was never cured of. This leads to a breakdown, a rupture in consciousness, mental anorexia, and madness, a threshold after which there is no longer any remembrance of love or treason, and eventually no memory as such (*L'Amour*). For the heroines of *L'Amour*, *Woman of the Ganges*, and *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, there are no longer any memories. Their desire has died twice, since true death, like in Proust, consists in forgetting the very forgetting of love, in forgetting that it has ever even existed. More painful than despair, which may contain a form of hope, this peaceful madness, this separation from oneself and one's memory, means finality and the end. On the ruins of desire, the devastation of the world may now begin; but also the birth, from chaos, of the "milky fog" of writing.

Translated by Marina Schumann

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